

Open Business

minutes

Board Meeting on 11 July 2006 held in the CRASSH buildings, 17 Mill Lane



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Board of Graduate Studies

Present: Dr PC Hewett (Chair), Prof GAJ Amaratunga (from Item 1065), Dr GMW Cook, Professor MJ Daunton, Dr LRR Gelsthorpe, Professor GP Hawthorn, Professor ML Jacobus, Professor SK Rankin, Dr F Leeper, Professor BJ Sahakian, Ms B Bowers, Mr R Whittaker, with Dr LE Friday as Secretary and Dr N Tooke.

Apologies were received from Professor G Amaratunga, Professor LF Gladden, Dr LEA Howe, Ms R Keeling, Dr K Maxwell, Ms CL Burton & Mrs L Whitebread.

Professor WA Brown, Professor RG Osborne and Dr J Runde were on sabbatical leave.

1058 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2006 were signed as a correct record.

Matters for report

1059 Membership of the Board

- 1059.1 Chairman, member in category (a)
The Board noted with pleasure that Professor Brown had been re-elected as the Vice-Chancellor's Deputy for a further year.
- 1059.2 Members in category (b) elected by the Council
Dr Cook had been nominated for reappointment for a further 4 years.
- 1059.3 Members in category (d) elected by the Graduate Tutors' Committee
Dr CR Hiley had been nominated to replace Dr Howe, who had resigned because of a clash with the Faculty timetable.
- 1059.4 Member in category (f) elected to the General Board by the Graduate Students

Mr Whittaker was welcomed to his first meeting as the graduate student member elected to the General Board but it was noted that he would be standing down, creating a vacancy; Ms Bowers was welcomed to her first meeting as Graduate Union President.

1060 Fee payments to Non-University Institutions (NUIs)

(Paper 2353 refers)

The Board noted the Pro-Vice-Chancellor's agreement with the Head of the Sanger Institute and agreed to vary the arrangements for fee repayments in respect to the Sanger Institute only. It was agreed to repay to the Institute the difference between overseas and home fee rates for Overseas students; the arrangements for Home/EU students would remain the same (one half of the Home fee). These arrangements would pertain from **2006-07** (*not 2007-08 as stated in paper 2353 and in the agenda note*).

Matters requiring discussion

1061 Annual Report of the Board of Graduate Studies for January-September 2004 and academical year 2004-05.

(Papers 2347a and 2347b refer)

The Board welcomed the change to the new format and reporting on the basis of an academical (rather than calendar) year. The Report was signed following minor amendment.

1062 Masters degrees review

1062.1 Overview of masters courses

(Paper 2354 refers)

The scheme was welcomed as an attempt to clarify the nature, structure and function of the heterogeneous group of courses currently classified as MPhil degrees. Further work is clearly needed in the light of changing Research Council policies and European developments.

1062.2 Part-time route to the MPhil Degree

(Paper 2355 refers)

The Board welcomed the draft Report and agreed to recommend the introduction of a part-time route at the earliest opportunity.

1062.3 Proposal for a new masters degree: the Master of Research (MRes) Degree

(Paper 2356 refers)

The Board noted the arguments in favour of introducing a distinctive degree for research preparation but felt that further research and consultation would be helpful to clarify the need for such a degree. The Secretary was asked to provide information about the status and structure of research masters degrees at other universities.

1062.4 Relationship between the MPhil and PhD Degrees

(Paper 2357 refers)

The Board unanimously agreed that there is a strong academic case for ending the practice at the outset of the PhD of backdating the start of the course to include an MPhil; they agreed, however, that there may be a good case for doing so if a candidate is ready to submit a thesis before the 9 terms of the PhD have expired. This arrangement would start for all candidates entering in 2007; candidates already admitted under the old understanding would be allowed to count the MPhil if the Degree Committee so recommended.

It was further agreed that the MPhil will no longer be offered 'in the first instance' but that all candidates should apply to continue to a PhD. Some concern had been raised in some Faculties about the effect this might have on recruitment (especially in the Art & Humanities); the Secretary was asked to bring forwards some figures on the likely effects.

The Board also noted that Research Councils and some other funding bodies are increasingly offering studentships of more than 3 years' duration; it was agreed to return to the question of accommodating 3.5 and 4-year PhD programmes within the regulations.

1063 Examination for the MPhil degree in Advanced in Chemical Engineering Practice

(Paper 2365 refers)

The Board approved, for its part, the removal of the requirement for a placement and the consequent change in title to 'Advanced Chemical Engineering' with effect from October 2006.

1064 Proposal for a new MPhil Degree in Politics

(Paper 2368 refers)

Professor Hawthorn introduced the paper. The Board welcomed this new paper, recalling previous consideration of a similar proposal in 2003. The Board were generally satisfied with the arrangements set out in Paper 2368, but asked Professor Hawthorn to provide more detailed figures for the changes in teaching load and new members of staff that would make the new proposal viable. Subject to reassurance on this point, the Board agreed to support the proposal.

1065 Code of Practice for Research Degrees
(Paper 2370 refers)

The Board considered responses to the consultation on the draft document. Support for the Code of Practice was very positive and there was general agreement about most of the content. In response to specific comments from the Degree Committees and the QAA, the Board agreed: to clarify further the role of the members of the supervisory team, in particular the role of 'advisor'; to exclude the supervisor from the 'assessors' of written work submitted for formal assessment but to include him/her in consideration of the overall progress and prospects of the student as part of the registration exercise; to allow assessors to act as internal examiners of the thesis.

It was further agreed that the document could not be expected to accommodate all variants but should aim to set benchmarks and standards of good practice. There was also support for the production of a 'short' version of the Code of Practice that could be sent to all applicants receiving an offer.

The Board noted that this Code of Practice will be made available to all research students and their supervisors and Degree Committees etc in October 2006; a Code of Practice for graduate courses with taught elements will be drafted and circulated for consultation in Michaelmas 2006.

1066 Examination for the MPhil Degrees in the Faculty of English: English Studies; American Literature; and Medieval & Renaissance Literature
(Papers 2390 and 2391 refer)

The Board approved for their part the proposed harmonisation of the number of essays with effect from 2006-07 and the course length of Medieval & Renaissance Literature from 2007-08.